

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Front Page

Local & Regional

- [Philadelphia & Suburbs](#)
- [Montgomery County](#)
- [Chester County](#)
- [Bucks County](#)
- [South Jersey](#)

US & World

Sports

- [High School](#)

Business

Daily Magazine

Editorials & Commentary

- [Metro Commentary](#)
- [South Jersey](#)

Commentary

- [Pennsylvania](#)

Commentary

- [Community Voices](#)

Columnists

Personal Finance &

Investing

Tech.life

Health & Science

Food & Dining

Home & Design

Weekend

Arts & Entertainment

Travel

Sunday Neighbors

Real Estate

Education

- [School Report Card](#)

Religion

Automotive

Obituaries

Photography

Books

Sunday Review

Image

Special Reports

Search

for

[Back to Home](#) >

Monday, Aug 04, 2003

Local & Regional

Posted on Tue, Jul. 29, 2003

The Philadelphia Inquirer

50-year project will restore birds' Cape May flyway

More than \$74 million will be spent to rebuild coastline - not

for property owners, but wildlife.

By Jacqueline L. Urgo
Inquirer Staff Writer

CAPE MAY POINT, N.J. - Preserving a "precious jewel" of beachfront and freshwater wetland at the tip of New Jersey is the focus of a project disclosed here yesterday.

Officials from the state Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and legislators signed a pact at Cape May Point State Park that will provide more than \$74 million over the next 50 years to preserve Cape May Meadows. The project also will replenish sand along a nearly two-mile stretch of beachfront between Third Avenue in Cape May City and Central Avenue in Cape May Point.

Unlike other sand replenishment along New Jersey's coastline protecting waterfront properties and beaches, this project focuses on preserving coastal areas important to migratory birds and other wildlife, DEP Commissioner Bradley Campbell said.

"Our economic and environmental future depends vitally on the restoration and protection of such environmentally significant treasures up and down the coast," Campbell told more than 200 people at the signing. "But this place isn't just a New Jersey treasure, this is an international treasure."

Shopping & Services

[Find a Job](#)

[Find a Car](#)

[Find a Home](#)

[Find an Apartment](#)

[Classifieds Ads](#)

[Shop Nearby](#)

Stocks

Enter symbol/company name

The geography of the cape acts as a kind of land's end funnel for millions of songbirds, shore birds, and raptors that migrate through each autumn before continuing to South America.

The area is also an important breeding site for both rare and common birds. Estimates total more than 60,000 raptors and more than a million seabirds migrating through the area each year.

The birds, which can number as many as 100,000 from more than 60 species in a single day, also attract people who come to see them.

But as development has increased at the Shore over the last four decades, environmentalists have worried that a loss of natural habitat here could seriously affect the world's bird populations, said Jay Laubengeyer, a director with the Nature Conservancy.

The flyway has also been severely affected by shoreline erosion that has left the existing freshwater ecosystem substantially degraded through saltwater intrusion and alteration of drainage patterns.

Environmentalists say the dune breaching has resulted in alterations to the freshwater wetlands and their ability to support the unique and endangered animals and plants that live there.

"That's what makes this project so important," Laubengeyer said. "Unlike a lot of things that happen in this region, this one has the potential to have a significant positive impact worldwide."

The initial phase of the project is expected to cost \$15 million and will include the elimination of 95 acres of phragmites, an invasive non-native species of reed that prevents the growth of nutrient-rich plants, which provide nourishment for a range of wildlife.

Restoration of a protective dune and berm, extending from Cape May City to Cape May Point, will get under way when

construction begins in September. The dune construction will use 2.3 million cubic yards of sand, with the periodic nourishment of 650,000 cubic yards every four years, said Lt. Col. Thomas Chapman, commander of Army Corps' Philadelphia District.

Chapman said the project would also include the planting of 18 acres of dune vegetation, seaward restoration of 35 acres of previously eroded wetlands, and the planting of 105 acres of wetland vegetation.

The Army Corps also will create drainage ditches, install water-control structures and deep-water fish reservoirs, and build a tide gate at Cape Island Creek for a 25-acre tidal marsh.

U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine, who was also on hand for the signing, called the picturesque spot "a precious jewel, not just for New Jersey or the East Coast, but all of North America."

"Few things we do as public officials are as important as protecting our precious natural resources," Corzine said. "The Lower Cape May Meadows is a special sanctuary that must be protected and preserved. This project demonstrates once again our full commitment to protecting our Jersey Shore for all of us today and for future generations."

Cape May Point Mayor Malcolm Fraser, whom other officials called "tenacious" when it came to seeing the project come to fruition after years of work, said he was thrilled with the 50-year pact.

"This will ensure preservation of this magical place for a long, long time," Fraser said.

Contact staff writer Jacqueline L. Uργο at 609-823-9629 or jurgo@phillynews.com.



[email this](#)



[print this](#)



[license this](#)



[reprint this](#)



Click here
to visit other
Real Cities sites

[Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Archives](#) | [Place an Ad](#) | [Newspaper Subscriptions](#)
[About Philly.com](#) | [About Realcities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [About Knight](#)
[Ridder](#) | [Copyright](#)